

NORTH HILL COUNTRY PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE
MENTAL HEALTH ATTORNEY GRANT APPLICATION (FY 27/28)

APPLICATION FORM

Counties Represented:	Burnet, Blanco, and Llano
Fiscal Year:	2027/2028
State Payee Identification Number:	74-600454
Division to Administer Grant:	North Hill Country Public Defender's Office
Program Title:	NHCPDO Mental Health Attorney
Requested Grant Amount:	\$181,592.79
Authorized Official:	Michelle Moore
Financial Officer:	Kelley Glaeser
Program Director:	Michelle Moore
Mailing Address:	220 S Pierce St., Burnet, TX 78611

INTRODUCTION (Executive Summary)

Clients with mental health issues present many complex issues to attorneys striving to give the best possible defense. The North Hill Country Public Defender's Office (NHCPDO) will hire one FTE attorney to specifically train in and handle these cases. This attorney will handle cases of clients with the most severe mental health issues, and work closely with the NHCPDO social workers to develop and enhance services available to individuals with MHMR needs in the criminal justice system.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Mental health issues affect people in the criminal justice system in many ways, from being a basis for why the alleged offense was committed to one's ability to understand the fundamentals of the court system and right from wrong. A client may be anything from incompetent to stand trial, to just have minor issues that can be used as a mitigation factor to get the client treated fairly through the system. Not just through the court system, but some clients may be unable to complete standard terms of probation and need some accommodations to make success with probation even possible, otherwise we are setting them up for failure.

The laws and rules surrounding mental health are very complex. There are specific findings that need to be made to find someone incompetent, and separate findings that would lead to findings of insanity, or court ordered medications, or civil commitments. Not only are there different findings that need to be made, the specific qualifications of the medical professionals making the findings are different depending on the finding being made. Having one attorney specialized in these issues would provide these clients with an advocate that knows the laws completely and can ensure the correct professionals are being used for the correct kinds of evaluations to get the correct outcomes in these cases.

This is a vital need in this community. There are currently 152 out of 649 (23.4%) probationers that have mental health issues and are receiving some form of treatment for mental health issues while on probation. This does include the probationers that are stable on prescribed medications. There are also 39 defendants reporting to bond supervision that are receiving some form of mental health interventions while their legal cases are pending. In addition, the Burnet County Jail currently has 5 inmates awaiting a bed at the state hospital because they have been incompetent. That is slightly

higher than what the jail normally has (between 1-4 inmates on the list) but that number has been higher, up to a maximum of 7 in the past year. In addition to the incompetent inmates, the jail also deals with a majority of their clients that have some level of mental health issues, and up to 85% of the inmates receive some level of mental health intervention. All of these individuals have either been through, or are going through the system and a mental health attorney would be able to ensure their unique issues were being fully addressed.

OBJECTIVE

IMMEDIATE - Obtain an FTE Attorney dedicated to understanding mental health issues and helping clients those issues through the system. This attorney will be required to understand the statutes that deal with mental health including competency and insanity defenses. They will work closely with the social workers to build relationships with the different MHDDs that serve our multiple counties as well as the providers and doctors that can evaluate and provide insight to out clients.

LONG TERM – This attorney will work with Social Workers and the courts to enhance programs and resources available to clients with Mental Health needs. These solutions could include creating a Mental Health Court, working on obtaining alternative avenues to competency restoration, and providing greater understanding of Mental Health needs of our clients.

ACTIVITY

Hire an attorney with at least 2 years of criminal law experience, and a background in mental health work, or a desire to work with clients with Mental health needs.

EVALUATION

Track number of clients appointed each month. Track types of mental health related outcomes for cases, ie insanity, competency, civil commitment.

FUTURE FUNDING

This grant application is to cover the cost of the attorney, along with the resources that attorney will need including a computer workstation, code books and access to software at 80% coverage by TIDC for the first year with 20% coverage by the three Counties. Subsequent years will be covered 66 2/3% by TIDC and 33 1/3% by the counties.

BUDGET NARRATIVE AND BUDGET FORM

Hire one Mental Health Attorney (salary \$133461.01 and benefits \$42,784.78) Purchase 1 Microsoft Surface Laptop, docking station, monitors and accessories to be utilized by the NHCPDO Mental Health Attorney (quoted cost \$3500). Supplies include access to software licenses including Adobe (\$160), code books (\$87). Travel and training allocation for required CLE classes (\$1,600).

FTE	1.0
Salary	\$133,461.01
Fringe Benefits	\$42,784.78
Travel and Training	\$1,600
Equipment	\$3,500
Supplies	\$247

Total	\$181,592.79
Required County Match (20%)	\$36,318.56
Total Less County Match	\$145,274.23